

Opening Statement by Congressman Dan Burton
Hearing of the Committee on International Relations
Title: “China’s Anti-Secession Law and Developments across the Taiwan Strait”
Wednesday, April 6, 2005, 9:00 a.m.

Mr. Chairman, thank you for holding this timely and important hearing regarding the People’s Republic of China’s (PRC) blatant and unilateral move to alter the status quo in the Taiwan Straits through the passage of its new Anti-Secession Law. For the past several months the PRC has taken a series of steps apparently designed to leave its “Good Neighbor” policy by the wayside and position itself to embark on a new campaign to promote it’s economic and military ambitions across the Straits and throughout the region.

Of course saber rattling by the PRC is nothing new, but the new Anti-Secession Law represents a dangerous dimension when put into the context of approximately 500 short-range ballistic missiles already aimed at Taiwan with more missiles and other offensive weapons being deployed by the PRC in areas adjacent to the Taiwan Strait on an almost daily basis.

The translations that I have read indicate that the new Law states: “Accomplishing the great task of reunifying the motherland is the sacred duty of all Chinese people including the Taiwan compatriots.” In short, the Anti-Secession Law obligates – and it’s important to stress that word – that the People’s Liberation Army use military force to annex Taiwan if Beijing believes Taiwanese rhetoric or actions are moving the Island towards independence or if China considers Taiwanese leaders are engaging in so-called separatist activities.

In addition, the law creates the legal grounds for Beijing to punish anyone speaking or acting against reunification of Taiwan and China. So this law not only threatens the status quo in the Taiwan Straits, but it represents a broad new instrument of oppression; the same kind of blunt instrument Beijing has resorted to in the past, and with grave consequences.

Even before China publicly unveiled this law, many of us in the Congress as well as State Department and the White House officials had warned our Chinese friends that this new law, and its hardened militaristic approach to future dealings with Taiwan, would undermine the progress and goodwill that has spread across the Straits in recent years. Unfortunately, our warnings went unheeded and the predictable result has been an escalation in military tensions in the Taiwan Straits.

Chinese President Hu Jintao must believe that our need for Beijing’s cooperation on the North Korean Nuclear threat outweighs our commitment to defend the 23 million inhabitants of democratic Taiwan. However, with American soldiers dying overseas in Afghanistan and Iraq in order to bring democracy and freedom to people who have long suffered under tyranny, to assume that the United States cares so little about Taiwan - a vibrant and pluralistic democracy that respects human rights and the rule of law, and has

been an important ally of the United States for over half a century – is a grave miscalculation in my opinion, but perhaps part of Beijing’s larger strategy to increasingly test the boundaries of America’s power and influence throughout the Pacific.

Regarding China’s influence throughout the World, later today Congressman Menendez and I will be convening a Subcommittee on the Western Hemisphere hearing to examine the opportunities and threats posed by China in the Western Hemisphere. Over the last few years, the PRC has been moving aggressively into Latin America with billions of dollars of investments, trade agreements and massive infrastructure development in the name of economic development. We intend to utilize the example of China’s activities in the Hemisphere to highlight the fundamental debate over Beijing’s official foreign policy.

If China’s number-one priority is truly economic development, when push comes to shove, will Beijing pursue a policy that places an emphasis on stabilizing the international environment or will it seek to offset the status quo, and displace traditional trade frameworks and alliances, in order to create strategic openings for itself?

Should the stand-off over Taiwan flare into open violence, it will undoubtedly have repercussions far beyond the Taiwan Straits. So, I believe that we need to send a strong message to the People’s Republic of China that a return to the status quo in Taiwan and the “Good Neighbor” policy, which has worked so effectively for so long, is in the best interests of all parties.

To that end, I was pleased to see Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice raise this issue and register our serious concerns in Beijing last month, and I was also pleased to co-sponsor Chairman Hyde’s Concurrent Resolution 98 denouncing the Anti-Secession Law, which passed the House by a strong bipartisan vote of 424-4.

I was also heartened by the news that the European Union will likely choose not to lift the arms embargo imposed after the Tiananmen Square slaughter of thousands of students and freedom activists in 1989. Although the EU has not tied the issue of the Anti-Secession Law to the lifting of the arms embargo, I am skeptical that it is mere coincidence that the EU was considering the idea before the adoption of the Anti-Secession Law, yet it firmly rejected the notion after it was adopted.

We must not forget the sacrifices of those who died in Tiananmen Square and the freedoms they died for. Likewise, we must not let Beijing ratchet up tensions across the Taiwan Straits and intimidate into submission the free people of Taiwan. If we are serious about enhancing the spread of human rights, democracy and freedom across the globe, we must stand up for the rights of the people of Taiwan.

Thank you.